

# CHINA'S EDUCATION, PAST AND PRESENT

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## INTRODUCTION:

China is one of the earliest civilized countries in the world. It has recorded history of about 5000 years. In its long history China has been invaded and conquered many times. Its territories have expanded and shrunk, and more than once China was divided with different rulers controlling independent areas<sup>1</sup>.

China's long history of civilization depended on the long history of education. Education, as human's high intelligence activity came into being with the appearance of civilized human beings. Written literature and educational institutions appeared in China more than 2000 years. A great increase in the volume of literature in education took place, which saw the rise of the classical schools of philosophy later identified as Confucianism, Taoism, Masoism and Legalism. But of all the classical schools, Confucianism became the dominant school of thought in China.

The pattern of educational development in the People's Republic of China has reflected the larger picture of national politics. It has been equally turbulent with its ups and downs, advance and retreats. The task of creating a new national system on the basis of a new ideology has under gone several major policy shift's.<sup>3</sup>

From 1949 to 1952, after 12 years of war, all out efforts were made to restore educational order, to organize schools on all levels, and to prepare the ground for fast expansion of educational facilities. Also during this initial phase all schools with foreign connections were taken over by the state and the old intellectuals were subjected to intensive thought remolding.

The second phase from 1953 to 1957 was a period of consolidation and expansion during which substantial gains were achieved on all fronts, from literacy classes in rural areas to post graduate programs in major universities. Internationally China was

"leaning to one side", that of Soviet Union, and Soviet teachers and advisers came by the thousands bringing their own pedagogy. Soviet teaching materials were adopted by the Chinese and translated in large quantities.<sup>4</sup>

During the third phase, from 1958 to 1961, China no longer followed the Soviet lead and was forced to adopt the excessively ambitious program known as the great leap forwards, which emphasized self-reliance. Education was subjected to more stringent control by party cadres and to greater demands for manual labor on the part of both teachers and students.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth phase, which began in 1961 and ended with the out break of the cultural revolution in 1966, was a period of retrenchment. The moderate faction within the communist party strove to restore a sense of normality to the schools by encouraging teachers to resume full time professional work and by reducing the amount of labour required of student's.<sup>6</sup>

After the death of Chairman Mao, many administrative as well as other changes were made. Jian Nanxiang was again appointed. Jain Nanxiang was president of Qinghua University and Minister of Higher Education before 1966. But during the great cultural revolution he was dismissed from office, on the change that hard followed the revisionist line in education and that he had trained intellectuals aristocrats.

Now new enrolment system was introduced which provided all children of China with opportunity to take part in examinations for entering college. A major change in the college enrolment was introduced in China in 1977 with the adoption of unified examinations, all round appraisal of student's morally, intellectually and physically.<sup>7</sup>

On 22 April 1978 a national educational conference was held which was presided by Teug Siao Ping declared that "from now on not only secondary schools and colleges must make an overall examination of the applicants irrespective of their moral, intellectual and physical level and enroll only those who are out standing, all department's should gradually do like wise and in

increasing their work force give priority to those who are outstanding".<sup>8</sup>

The Ministry of Education recently introduced new teaching system for primary and middle schools, and promulgated the draft plan for a ten years full time teaching system for primary and middle school. According to this plan full time primary and middle schools education will take ten years i.e. five years for primary schools and five years for middle schools. In the case of the letter, the first three years will be devoted to teaching junior middle school courses and the last two years to teaching senior middle school subjects. Wherever conditions permit, the enrolment of six year old or a six and-a-half year old children in primary schools would be gradually enforced.<sup>9</sup>

In the past ten years a number of universities and colleges, middle and primary schools have been selected as key institutions throughout the country. These key schools are provided with better teachers and better equipment and have the advantage of enrolling the best students. Many schools have divided student's of the same year into "quick and slow" classes in accordance with their standard, and some schools have set up special classes for the very best. Teaching can be conducted at a faster pace to the better students, and in the case of students who have neglected their studies will be given extra tutoring to help them catch up with the others. There is tendency in some places and schools to pay attention only to key schools and classes with better students to the neglect of the rest.<sup>10</sup>

In 1985, China instituted a nine year compulsory education system which greatly boosted the development of basic education in the country.

By 1997, 65% of the nation's populated regions had enforced the system, with 98.9% of school age children enrolled nationwide.

In addition, gross enrolment for junior middle school (12-14 years of age) reached 87% and the primary to junior middle school enrolment rate stood at 93.7 compared with 57.7% in



1978. In that year 23.5% of the population was illiterate. By the end of 1997 that figure had dropped to 12.01%. specifically, the illiteracy rate for the 15–40 age group fell from 18.5% to 6% lower than the average rate of developing countries.<sup>11</sup>

Governments at all levels are increasing spending on ethnic education. Preferential policies are granted to minority-inhabited regions which are economically underdeveloped.

Over the past 20 years, China has forged cooperative ties for educational exchanges with 154 countries and regions. More than 250,000 foreign students from 152 countries and regions have studied in China, in return China has sent nearly 300,000 students to 103 countries and regions, of whom 90,000 have returned. Since 1993 the number of students returning from overseas has been growing at 13% annually, with the number of returnees exceeding that for send out.<sup>12</sup>

Since 1978, China has promulgated a series of national laws and local regulations, including regulations of the People's Republic of China Governing Degree–Awarding law on compulsory education, law on protection of Minors, Teachers law, Vocational educational law, education law and higher education law. The rule of law has been introduced into the development of education in China. These remarkable achievements over the last 20 years have intellectually prepared China for expansion in the early 21st Century, they have also laid a solid foundation for the further growth of educational undertakings. Overall the level of education in China is equivalent to that in countries with a per capita GNP of US\$ 1,300 (in 1997, China's per capita GDP was US\$ 750).

China supports the education of 20% of the world's population with a little more than 1% of the world's spending on education. That is a remarkable achievement. On the other hand, it also suggests that China's spending on education is seriously inadequate. The government and the society at large continue to confront the pressing task of developing education.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION:

In the end it can be concluded that the enthusiasm for education has long been something of a national trait of the Chinese people, and in recent years it has been evidenced by an explosive increase in the population receiving a university education. This phenomenon stems from various factors. One is the increasing ability of Chinese to bear the necessary expenses, which is a result of a higher income level, made possible by the rapid economic growth.

Moreover, since couples are having fewer children, they can give more attention to the quality of each child's education another factor is the high priority that the business world places on education background when recruiting new employees.

China had already initiated a multi level and multi format higher education system fundamentally comprehending all disciplines. Institutions of higher learning in China include universities or colleges for professional training. The well known institutions of higher learning include Beijing university, Qimghua University, Yudan University, Ninkai University, Chinese University of Science and Technology and Nanjing University. At present China is focusing its energies on carrying out the "211 project" effectively engineering and cultivating 100 major universities and an extensive group of important disciplines and acres of study with an eye turned towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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